

which in turn mean further obligations for the provincial governments.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, as long as the federal government will not give the provinces the financial power enabling them to meet their provincial obligations, the Canadian confederation will unfortunately be in trouble and will continue to be threatened, not only by Quebec, but also by the other provinces. Why? Because the provinces were given responsibilities and the federal government was given the financial powers to meet those responsibilities.

Why this perpetual conflict in our federal-provincial relations, and why does the federal government refuse to tackle the financial problems to allow the provinces to achieve what they want and what they can do in their own sphere and within their own territory?

Mr. Speaker, this is why, like the former prime minister of Canada said, it is useless and pointless to talk about democracy in this Chamber as long as we have not placed financial powers in the hands of those who have provincial obligations towards the population. This is why, Mr. Speaker, we would like the government to realize before it is too late that it is up to the federal government to take action to save Canadian unity and Canadian confederation.

You cannot blame children who want to leave the family home when they have reached an adult age if they are given only promises and told: Come and argue constantly at federal-provincial conferences, and you will still go back with promises because the federal government has not wanted, at least until now, to give the provinces the financial powers that they had before, but that the federal government took over because of an international event in 1939, at the start of the Second World War.

Mr. Speaker, instead of wanting to control the provinces, the federal government must therefore become somewhat more flexible, more understanding, and stop issuing secret directives to the world of finance so as to strangle a government which may have socialistic tendencies, I admit it, but which has still been chosen by the majority of Quebec voters. Let us therefore give this government the opportunity to pass good legislation if it has any. Let us give this government the opportunity to become bankrupt if the only thing it can offer the population of Quebec is economic bankruptcy. Mr. Speaker, I hope that this government can take its responsibilities and that it can request not the separation of Quebec from the Canadian confederation, but the financial powers needed to enable Quebec to fill its own aspirations.

[English]

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I am a Canadian. I believe in Canada. I believe in one strong united nation. I believe in a federation of regions united in mutual respect and common interest, in both the richness of regional diversity and the unity of a creative federalism that, in spite of many gusts, has burned so brightly on since 1867.

While it might well be that Canadians are drawn toward regionalism because they are disenchanted with a repressive

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central government, the striving for an expression of identity from a regional perspective deserves close examination as to its potential to give expression to a new type of regional federalism. This new balanced federalism need not be a decentralization or a weakening of either federal or provincial responsibilities. Canadians have nothing to fear from strong regions as long as there is strong national government as well.

What we clearly need to ensure is a rational redistribution of responsibilities between the federal and provincial governments, a rational redistribution that involves clarity and the elimination of overlapping jurisdiction and duplication. This would mean that both the provinces and the federal government must be willing to forgo some programs, recognizing that certain services are delivered better by other levels of government.

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The country has been committed to universality in social programming, which suggested that we should treat all regions as though they were the same although we knew they were not. Why, for example, apply a massive employment program in a region which has no real unemployment problem, but rather a weakness in its transportation links? Why not develop programs in response to regional needs rather than on the basis of universality for the sake of universality? We are a diverse country and we need institutions which reflect and accommodate that diversity.

Canada is in fact a federation of diverse regions. Why not recognize this situation and build from it? Why not recognize regional aspirations, maximize them, and allow them to replace the small but powerful vested interest groups which express their demands only too effectively on an old, tired structure which capitulates because of the impotency of a castrated parliament, stripped of its authority, dignity, and ability to produce for, and in the interest of, the majority of Canadians?

The clash of opposing regional forces is the seed from which Canadian identity must and will grow. Directed positively, in a spirit of co-operative federalism, it could be the new dynamism to drive a renewed confederation. Let us recognize not just two regions of Canada but rather the many diverse regions of our country, acknowledging each for the validity of its own unique cultural, social, political and economic aspirations. Let us recognize that Canada is great because of its freedom from uniformity, because of its capacity to tolerate, accept, and appreciate the great freedom of choice inherent in that diversity. Let us not be limited by our diversity; let us be elevated by it. Let us feel that our potential, is broadened and enhanced by it instead of retreating in fear from the reality, from the expressed desire for this new type of regional balanced federalism.

The present government has waited too long before recognizing the regional aspirations of Canadians. The bill before us is but a token attempt at recognition of those aspirations. The government and its leader are attempting to play the role of the saviours of Confederation. Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minis-